



The STEWARD

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
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Michael F. Easley
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William G. Ross Jr.
 Secretary, DENR

PARKS ARE CENTERS FOR LEARNING

The April rain was good for the swamp. And, it was good for the critters there, but not such good news for the busloads of fourth graders en route to Goose Creek State Park to learn about their environment.

But learn they did, despite the downpours, noisily fanning out into the classrooms and laboratories of the park system's first environmental education center built in 1998.

"It's hard enough to get those weeks when the weather's good, what with end-of-grade testing and other things. In the past, when we had bad weather, we just had to cancel and couldn't reschedule," said Rodney Wollard, Beaufort County's soil conservation supervisor.

It was the eighteenth year of the Beaufort Soil and Water Conservation District Field Days, a week-long immersion into environmental education staged by members of five state agencies. For many years, the event was conducted by determined rangers and soil conservationists in the park's picnic grounds.

Since that time, at this event alone, more than 20,000 youngsters have learned a



RANGER ANDY FAIRBANKS TEACHES ABOUT WETLANDS AT GOOSE CREEK.

valuable lesson or two about the world they live in. A number of state parks host similar events for schoolchildren, and it's just one aspect of a rambling enterprise of the state parks called environmental education.

In the past two decades, the state parks system has grown into one of the principal environmental education agencies in the state and in the southeast.

Each day in North

Carolina's state parks, old and young North Carolinians are exposed to nature hikes, formal programs and lectures, videos, museum-quality exhibits, wayside trail displays, teaching seminars, or maybe just a long chat with a ranger about an aspect of the natural world.

All of this learning that's taking place is no accident. It's a concerted effort by the Division of Parks and Recreation to teach people about their environment.

"The logic is very clear," said Phil McKnelly, division director. "The more people learn

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 INFO AND EVENTS**

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

William Smith, formerly a Maintenance Mechanic III, was promoted to Maintenance Mechanic IV at Lake Norman State Park where he has worked since May, 1996. Smith has 26 years of related experience.

Timothy Johnson was promoted from a Park Ranger I to Park Ranger II at South Mountains State Park where he has worked since September, 2000. Johnson has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation

management from Western Carolina University and an associate's degree in forest management from Haywood Community College.

Matthew Windsor transferred from Fort Macon State Park to Hanging Rock State Park as a Ranger II. Windsor has a bachelor's degree in parks and natural resource management from North Carolina State University and entered the division as a Park Ranger I at Hanging Rock

State Park where he was employed for more than a year before working at Fort Macon.

Martha Blacker transferred from Crowders Mountain State Park to Lake Norman State Park as Office Assistant III. Blacker began working for the division in May, 1994, at Lake Norman. She has been with the division for more than nine years.

Katharine Kellon was hired as a Park Ranger I at Hammocks Beach State Park. She has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and worked as a seasonal ranger at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area and Carolina Beach State Park.

William Jarman was hired as a Park Ranger II at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area. Jarman worked as an Assistant Park Ranger at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, as a waterfowl hunting guide and as a wildlife biologist intern studying red-cockaded woodpeckers. He has a bachelor's degree in fisheries and wildlife sciences from North Carolina State University.

Robert Johnson was hired as a Maintenance Mechanic II at Stone Mountain State Park. He is an Army veteran and has more than 23 years of related work experience.

Andrew Fairbanks was hired as a Park Ranger I at Goose Creek State Park. Fairbanks has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He has more than

From The Director's Desk

Dear fellow employees:

The people in our Division excel at each of the varied aspects of their jobs, but perhaps none more so than the educational aspect. That's reflected by the steadily rising attendance at our interpretive and educational programs and in the sheer number of the programs themselves and the range of topics that they cover. And, many of the complimentary letters that we receive mention that park personnel go out of their way to teach our visitors in a way that makes their visits more enjoyable.

I'm grateful for that type of teaching ethic. It demonstrates that we're not content with just keeping the park gates open, that we want to give our visitors something meaningful to take home with them.

I suspect that if environmental education weren't already a central component of our mission that our people would make it so, simply because they're so knowledgeable about what they do and so enthusiastic about sharing that knowledge.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer season.

Sincerely,

Phil

Philip K. McKnelly

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HOWERTON FILLS NEW MAINTENANCE POST

Seven-year division veteran Jerry Howerton is fulfilling new duties as the chief of maintenance, a newly created position within the Division of Parks and Recreation.

The responsibilities of this new position include overseeing the overall maintenance program for the division and issues relating to maintenance training, standards, staffing and procedures. The chief of maintenance will work as a contact and support person for district maintenance mechanics, maintenance staff and superintendents statewide, traveling to parks to provide assistance.



Howerton will also help develop and monitor the operations budget, equipment purchase priorities, training needs and staffing requirements. In addition, he will supervise the division warehouse, will coordinate repair and contract work with state and federal agencies when natural disasters occur, and will oversee maintenance-type construction contracts throughout the parks system.

"Having a centralized person in charge of (the division's) maintenance responsibility is a key element when you consider that from a statewide perspective, the most recent valuation of buildings, utilities and trails in state parks exceeds \$336 million," said Lewis Ledford, superintendent of state parks.

The state parks system now has 1,012 buildings totaling more than 544,000 square feet, 202 miles of roads and 437 parking areas.

"Efficient use of public funds to maintain these and the older facilities requires an orderly and

PERSONNEL *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2*

five years experience with state and county parks, including work as a seasonal ranger at Carolina Beach State Park and Fort Fisher State Recreation Area.

Jeffrey Owen was hired as Park Ranger I at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park. Owen has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and has nine months of related work experience, including working as a seasonal ranger at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area.

systematic approach," Ledford said. "Our maintenance staff at the parks do a great job, but with complex buildings and utilities systems that are the size of those serving municipalities, plus the number of visitors to state parks in the 13 million range per year and growing, the workload is sizable. As we continue to grow, we must continue that state park tradition of maintaining public facilities in as quality a manner as possible."

Ledford said that Howerton's experience, coupled with his resourcefulness, energy and teamwork abilities made him a top candidate for the job.

Howerton, whose office is in the Yorkshire Center, has a two-year vocational degree in residential and industrial electricity from Greenup County Area Vocational College in Kentucky. After graduating, he worked as a store manager for Consolidated Stores for six years and at Burlington Industries in facility maintenance for six years, gaining electrical, plumbing, carpentry and painting experience.

Howerton came to the division in 1996 as the north district's maintenance mechanic. His responsibilities included assisting park staff in planning projects, maintaining facilities, and working on Parks and Recreation Trust Fund capital improvement projects. His major projects include dam removal at Pilot Mountain State Park and recovery efforts after hurricanes Fran and Floyd.

Howerton said that many of his responsibilities as district maintenance mechanic will transfer to his new position.

"I'll be assisting the parks in the same manner," he said. "It's just that I'll be working with them on a larger scale. I think we've got a great system and we've got a lot of area to grow."

"Probably my biggest goal is to bring more awareness to how important maintenance and preventative maintenance is to our facilities to save money," he said.

Howerton's philosophy is that by keeping facilities maintained, safety and public enjoyment are ensured while the division's assets are preserved.

"When I was in management, one of the things I learned was that the first impression is the lasting impression," said Howerton. "If someone walks into your store and sees a dirty store, they tend to treat it in the same way. And, if they see a clean store, they tend to treat it with respect. The same thing applies to parks."

Howerton and his wife, Shelby, have a three-year-old daughter, Summer.

EDUCATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

about the natural resources they're seeing in our state parks, the more they value those resources and the better stewards of the environment they become.

"People tell us they want to learn more, and we want to be ready to teach them."

Environmental education is the third crucial leg of the division's mission. As set out in the state's Constitution and the State Parks Act of 1987, the parks system exists to preserve important natural resources, to provide suitable recreation and to educate citizens about those resources.

Eager to Learn

A surprising 86.5 percent of North Carolinians want to know more about the environmental consequences of their everyday decisions, and 94.3 percent feel environmental education should be taught in the state's schools.

That's according to a controlled survey completed last year by the nonprofit Environmental Education Fund.

Some other findings of the survey were:

- 64.8 percent feel environmental education and regulation are equally important.
- 53.3 percent feel the state is not spending enough money on the environment.
- 65.3 percent are not familiar with environmental education centers and opportunities.

That desire to learn is reflected in the field. Programs scheduled by rangers in the state parks, particularly for children, are often quickly filled to capacity.

There has always been a tradition of park



AT SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS, SCHOOLTEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATORS LEARN IN THE STATE PARKS.



WAYSIDE DISPLAYS CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING IN UNEXPECTED PLACES IN STATE PARKS.

rangers teaching, from the earliest days when a few folks would tag along on a nature hike. Rangers have broadened that tradition to include all types of teaching methods and a stunning variety of subject matter.

A recent sampling from the division's website showed five dozen programs listed at four state parks within a month – on 27 different topics.

Topics are as varied as the interests of the rangers and their visitors – birdwatching, astronomy, marine science, geology, regional history, even varmints "that go bump in the night."

A majority of park superintendents and rangers in North Carolina are certified environmental educators, and each ranger goes through specialized training to develop "interpretive skills" that will make programs more enticing and exciting.

In 2002, the last year for which complete figures are available, the state parks system reached 253,205 people through structured environmental education programs and events, up 4 percent from the previous year.

And, more than 1,300 teachers and environmental educators attended programs to help them integrate environmental education into their core curriculums.

Using Different Tools

These structured programs are great, inexpensive family entertainment, but they're only one way that learning takes place in a state park.

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EDUCATION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Since the NC General Assembly authorized a bond issue for state parks in 1993, and created the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund in 1994, a number of parks have been equipped with modern visitor's centers.

The centers are outfitted with auditoriums and classrooms to allow programs for schoolchildren and other organized groups to take place in all seasons. The education center at Goose Creek State Park is a natural extension of that idea, and similar centers for other regions of the state are planned.

Another innovation has been the visitor's center's exhibit hall that allows the parks to tell their stories on natural and cultural history through polished exhibits and videos. The exhibits are professionally researched and designed, and each is unique to the park.

The parks system is convinced that learning can take place wherever people congregate – or even linger. Trails, boardwalks, boat ramps, porches and picnic grounds are all potential sites for wayside displays created by rangers and the park system's professional education and exhibits staffers.

More fertile ground for education is the division's website. It offers everything from a "kid's page" with basic outdoor lessons to the complete texts of Environmental Education Learning Experiences geared for school curriculums. Some parks are developing their own web pages, within the division's website, to explore specialized subjects or cutting-edge technologies such as webcams and virtual tours.

All of these efforts are directed under the division's Interpretation and Education (I&E) Program, which gives formal guidance to all environmental education efforts. The division also created an I&E Council, which involves park-level employees in decisions that guide education.

The council has spent two years drafting a strategic plan and has adopted a "vision statement" that describes what the parks system wants to accomplish in the field. It reads, "Through its interpretive and educational program, the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation will instill in the public an understanding and appreciation of the significance of state parks and their resources.

"This interpretive and educational program will encourage: the development of a personal stewardship ethic; public support for preserving our natural and cultural resources; and a greater enjoyment of state parks and the unique opportunities they provide."



RANGER JOY GREENWOOD GIVES CEDARS NEW HOME.

ATLANTIC WHITE CEDARS PLANTED AT PETTIGREW

How many people have experienced the beauty of a pure stand of Atlantic white cedars? Not many.

This type of habitat is disappearing quickly due to several pressures, notably logging. It is estimated that only a few pure stands even exist in the eastern United States.

Pettigrew State Park staff recently planted 225 Atlantic white cedars on the south side of Lake Phelps. Historically, the cedars were found on this property in Washington and Tyrell counties, according to Superintendent Sid Shearin.

"Most were logged out in the early 1900s by the Roper Lumber Company. The remainder disappeared after the worst fire in North Carolina's history burned the area," Shearin said.

Ranger Joy Greenwood had hoped to find some regenerated populations. However, none could be located as Greenwood surveyed the park and examined infrared aerial photographs with biologist Wendy Stanton of the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

In late April, Ranger Lisa Williams was able to acquire cedars donated by Weyerhaeuser Inc. Rangers Greenwood and Austin Paul and seasonal employee J.R. Cabarras began planting the seedlings at the park's Pocosin natural area.

Although the hydrology of the site has been altered, the saturated peat soils are still ideal for the cedars to grow. Staffers at the wildlife refuge have planted several at nearby locations with excellent results.

"Deer browsing is one concern for seedling survival, but if they can establish themselves before getting pulled up, the browsing should be survivable," Greenwood said. "Only time will tell."

Rigid seedling protectors are being installed to help reduce browsing, she said.

PARKS EXPANDING WEBSITE REACH

While the division maintains standard websites for all the parks, those who choose to create their own park-initiated websites can greatly expand their online informational and educational material.

It's also a way to add another level of creativity to their website.

The first park to post its own park-initiated website was Gorges State Park at www.ncsparks.net/virtualtour.html. The site, posted last month, features a park map dotted with clickable buttons on waterways and facilities and along trails.

Website users click a button on the map to view a photograph of that location in the park. Links to websites of local interest are also included on the site.

Other park staffs are planning on launching similar sites. In April, a handful of rangers gathered at Pettigrew State Park for some high-tech training – an introduction to creating pages for the worldwide web. The workshop was offered by division staff. Participants included rangers from Pettigrew, Medoc Mountain and Hammocks Beach state parks.

Any web pages created by park staff or volunteers are considered park-initiated websites. These websites are to reside on the NC Division of Parks and Recreation server and are to be linked from the current park homepages in a similar fashion to the National Park Service "In Depth" web pages. Internet visitors will go to a park homepage and see a button on the navigation bar that will link to the park-initiated website for those parks that choose to create their own website.

With an ever-growing range of educational and interpretive information available at parks, with increasing and improving public access to the internet, and with the current budget restricting the amount of printing parks can afford, the web is one way park rangers can now creatively and effectively reach visitors.

And, with computer programs that allow users with little or no Internet coding experience to create professional-quality web pages, the web is no longer a canvas reserved solely for certified programmers with interminable lists of credentials and years of technical training.



GORGES SITE OFFERS PHOTOGRAPHIC TOUR.

Material on park-initiated websites might include detailed discussions or photographs about a specific theme of a park, such as astronomy, Native American artifacts or park bird species. It might include a children's section with games or educational activities. Deciding what material to include on the park-initiated pages is up to each park and its rangers, who are given creative freedom with the pages, so long as they adhere to division guidelines that promote continuity and accessibility. No park will be required to create a website, and the division webmaster will continue to maintain the current park websites, regardless of the existence of a park-initiated website.

The workshop at Pettigrew State Park gave park rangers a basic understanding of the guidelines for park-initiated websites, as well as a basic knowledge of how to use a web design program.

During the first half of the workshop, division instructors introduced the concept of park-initiated websites and discussed web page components that must be gathered and organized before programming begins. Instructors also discussed the division web guidelines and federal guidelines that set some minimal parameters for government web pages.

During the second half of the workshop, participants received hands-on training in Dreamweaver, one of the most popular and user-friendly web design programs available (for both PCs and Macs). For more information about park-initiated websites or to schedule a workshop for a group of parks in your area, contact Tamara Ward at tamara.ward@ncmail.net.

WWW.NCSPARKS.NET
FOR STATE PARK INFO AND EVENTS

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT 2003

PARK	MAY 2003	TOTAL YTD MAY 2003	MAY 2002	TOTAL YTD MAY 2002	% CHANGE (2002/2003)	
					MAY	YTD
CAROLINA BEACH	28,527	90,524	26,953	82,989	6%	9%
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE	11,151	35,961	15,700	43,518	-29%	-17%
CROWDER'S MOUNTAIN	17,373	81,405	31,806	127,964	-45%	-36%
ENO RIVER	29,001	106,550	30,387	126,281	-5%	-16%
OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN	3,654	8,004	3,581	14,249	2%	-44%
FALLS LAKE	108,624	223,875	210,004	372,131	-48%	-40%
FORT FISHER	87,649	263,988	123,197	420,100	-29%	-37%
FORT MACON	136,246	400,012	141,330	454,066	-4%	-12%
GOOSE CREEK	12,486	50,509	14,166	60,979	-12%	-17%
GORGES	7,592	24,592	13,682	42,664	-45%	-42%
HAMMOCKS BEACH	16,824	54,135	24,990	66,972	-33%	-19%
HANGING ROCK	30,398	99,174	40,707	125,088	-25%	-21%
JOCKEY'S RIDGE	98,088	346,752	105,350	288,262	-7%	20%
JONES LAKE	16,052	43,650	12,260	33,416	31%	31%
JORDAN LAKE	88,017	157,382	283,421	600,473	-69%	-74%
KERR LAKE	143,404	369,444	256,496	625,008	-44%	-41%
LAKE JAMES	23,363	61,187	49,125	104,030	-52%	-41%
LAKE NORMAN	37,707	114,790	42,231	137,477	-11%	-17%
LAKE WACCAMAW	10,928	36,492	12,372	42,604	-12%	-14%
LUMBER RIVER	3,891	18,131	5,515	18,898	-29%	-4%
MEDOC MOUNTAIN	5,952	13,680	7,723	20,435	-23%	-33%
MERCHANT'S MILLPOND	20,135	49,693	11,389	41,006	77%	21%
MORROW MOUNTAIN	22,174	80,712	62,480	181,100	-65%	-55%
MOUNT JEFFERSON	8,007	32,031	9,888	30,730	-19%	4%
MOUNT MITCHELL	59,288	98,451	51,922	112,051	14%	-12%
NEW RIVER	15,031	41,887	22,085	49,565	-32%	-15%
PETTIGREW	13,749	42,367	11,858	30,183	16%	40%
PILOT MOUNTAIN		82,940	39,276	140,168	-100%	-41%
RAVEN ROCK	11,320	45,105	11,555	48,963	-2%	-8%
SINGLETARY LAKE	2,623	6,642	1,204	4,841	118%	37%
SOUTH MOUNTAINS	17,228	60,304	18,720	64,398	-8%	-6%
STONE MOUNTAIN	12,160	79,384	42,824	159,052	-72%	-50%
WEYMOUTH WOODS	2,343	12,213	2,959	12,831	-21%	-5%
WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD	42,079	121,184	40,237	167,964	5%	-28%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	1,143,064	3,353,150	1,777,393	4,850,456	-36%	-31%

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

and

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

SAFETY ZONE

Dress Right for Safety with PPE

- ☞ Always use the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and know how to use it correctly.
- ☞ Use the right tools for the job.
- ☞ Inspect equipment before each use to make sure it is in good working condition.
- ☞ Wear safety shoes or boots when working around heavy equipment.



The Steward

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